

# Wilkinson...from Page 1A

by local boards of education and election of local school board members by voters. It's the way Georgia used

to select school superintendents and school boards more than two decades ago.

The proposed constitutional amendment passed the State Senate on Friday, March 3 by a vote of 40-12. The first reading of the proposal in the State House came on Monday, March 6.

SR 192 proposes a constitutional amendment to make superintendents elected. They currently are appointed by school boards, which are elected. SR 192 by Sen. Wilkinson, who represents Towns County in Senate District 50, allows communities to change the rules by referendum if voters

first change the constitution.

The proposed legislation is co-sponsored by District 51 State Sen. Steve Gooch, who represents Union County in the State Senate.

According to Wilkinson, the average tenure of superintendents dropped to three years from eight years using the appointment method.

Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield said the proposal does offer a choice for voters.

"This legislation as I understand would allow the opportunity to choose elected or appointed," Dr. Rayfield said. "There are only

three states that currently have both. I believe the process of appointing superintendents by elected boards has been very beneficial for public education in Georgia. It has resulted in solid school governance across our state for several years. This model minimizes the involvement of politics in school governance."

Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong does not support the proposal.

"I think you will hear vastly varying opinions on this subject as there are pros and cons for each side, Dr. Berrong said. "For me personally, I'm an educator and not a politician

so I'm not in favor of this resolution. It is possible that elected superintendents would make decisions based on political agendas and getting votes. If the process changes back to an election for the local Superintendent in Towns County, I will continue to base my decisions on improving student achievement solely and will never make educational decisions based on politics. The education of our youth is far too important."

The change to elected school boards and appointed superintendents began in 1993.

The Georgia School Boards Association does not support SR 192.

## Mock Trial...from Page 1A

awards given by the opposing team. Juniors Clay Pickelsimer and Stephen Normyle picked up Round 1 Outstanding Attorney Awards.

In yet another historic moment, Union County won both Round 1 courtrooms to advance to Round 2, where they drew the daunting task of matching up with Mock Trial powerhouse, Grady High School. During the round Normyle and Pickelsimer received courtroom awards, and senior Nick Atkinson, along with Bailey, earned Outstanding Witness Awards.

Although Union did not advance to the final round, it is worth noting that its only loss all season came during the second round versus Grady--who, incidentally, went on to win the state title against Westminster Christian Academy later that afternoon.

Atkinson was also recognized for being a four-year member of Mock Trial. Pickelsimer and Normyle were also recognized for attending Georgia Law Academy and passing the Junior Bar Exam in September.

"I've never met a more exciting group of



Union County Mock Trial group shot from state competition

underclassmen," Atkinson said. "No matter what the other teams threw at us, we kept on going. Victory started to feel natural. I can't wait to come back and see what the team does next year.

"We are grateful to everyone who has supported us in any capacity over the past six months of this fabulous and historic season," he added.

One of the community members that played an integral role in the success of the Union County Mock Trial team was Enotah Judicial Circuit Superior Court Judge, the Honorable Murphy Miller, who has volunteered his time over the last few seasons as one of the squad's attorney coaches.

"Our attorney coach, Judge Miller has graciously given of his time for several

years," Union County Mock Trial Coach April Krieger said. "We are fortunate to have his legal expertise and experience. He spends many hours mentoring our team and guiding our understanding of rhetorical strategies, courtroom procedures, and the complexities of our legal system."

While not all students participating in Mock Trial will pursue a career in law, all have gained valuable experience that will benefit each member of the team, regardless of their career choices later in life. Atkinson plans on pursuing a future in engineering but the lessons learned from four years of mock trial will not be forgotten.

"Mock Trial taught me several things besides just the law," Atkinson said. "It

taught me people skills, social etiquette, and that everyone has a different perspective on the same things. I plan to go to Kennesaw State, majoring in Engineering and minoring in Journalism. Mock Trial was a passion, not a career choice. I did it for the team."

"We believe students participating in the Mock Trial program experience academic, social, and civic benefits -- for both now and their future," Coach Payne added. "The program is a valuable experience for these students, and more importantly, it is another way to invest in our community's future. These students may not all aspire to become lawyers after graduating, but they are learning valuable communication skills that will serve them for a lifetime."

## Blairsville Garden Club 32nd Annual Landscape Seminar

Want to know more about planting native plants/wildflowers in your garden? This is the place and time to learn.

VIPs are coming to town! Blairsville Garden Club is holding their 32nd annual Landscape Seminar on April 12 at Haralson Civic Center. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., lunch included. "Here Come the Natives" is the topic, with an in depth study of wildflowers and their use in the landscape.

Coming to town to help with the seminar are the following:

Ray Dorsey, Agronomist Manager, Georgia Department of Transportation

Chris DeGrace, GDOT Department of Maintenance, Atlanta office

Brad E. Davis, RLA, ASLA, Associate Professor/Bachelor Landscape Architect Coordinator, College of Environment, UGA, (who was one of the Gateway judges appointed by the Governor that awarded the Gateway grants to Blairsville/Union County

Heather Alley, Conservation Horticulturist, Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance, State Botanical Garden, UGA

Henning von Schmelting, Senior Director Operations, Chattahoochee Nature Center, Roswell, GA.

This is an outstanding group of speakers who will bring their knowledge and expertise to share with the public.

Registration is \$30 per person, which includes morning snacks and lunch with drinks.

Door prizes will be given at the end of the program.

Mark your calendar for this day. There will be no walk-ins at the door, and everyone must be registered ahead of time because of the catered lunches. E-mail to Kathryn Litton, chairman, kathlitt336@windstream.net for your registration form, telephone 706-781-4858 cell.

## Windstream

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State of Georgia for \$600,000 involving allegations of false internet speeds.

"Now, a year later, it is Alabama residents, many located in St. Clair County (including residents of Springville, Argo, Margaret, Moody, Ashville, Pell City, Odenville, Trussville, and Leeds), who are demanding that Windstream deliver on unfulfilled promises of high speed internet service."

Any current Windstream customer in Georgia is eligible to join the action, according to Beckum Kittle, and the law firm states that this is not a class action.

"Each case is filed as an individual arbitration pursuant to the Windstream Customer Contract," the law firm has said, adding that any fees obtained by their attorneys will be paid for by Windstream.

Additional questions have been directed to Beckum Kittle attorney Lindsey Ehlman, who can be reached at (205) 216-4817, or via email at lehlman@beckumkittle.com.

The Choestoe School House is located at 1034 Collins Rd. in Blairsville.